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SENEGAL

Leopold Sedar SENGHOR

President

Leopold Sedar Senghor, President since independence, has a formidable reputation as an intellectual which, coupled with his moderation, pragmatism and humanism, grants him a far more important position in African politics than the strength or influence of Senegal itself would suggest. But while Senghor's prestige is great, his influence is not. Long a champion of African unity, Senghor has been largely unsuccessful in persuading his neighbors of the advantages of regional association. His frequent trips and official visits are, in fact, overtures to build or reinforce bilateral agreements--evidence of his continuing efforts toward regional and, ultimately, continental unity.



(1961)

Senghor's basic political orientation is, and has been, pro-West and anti-Communist. He has associated Senegal closely with France and, as a result, has had to bear accusations of being too pro-French and too moderate by other African leaders.

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uing themes in his speeches include the complaint that foreign aid programs are decreasing rather than increasing and that industrialized nations are unwilling to accept their responsibilities toward the underdeveloped nations.

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Domestically, Senghor seems able to maintain the delicate political balance. He enjoys considerable popular support and has recouped his position from the instability following the attempted coup of former Prime Minister Mamadou Dia in December 1962. The crisis, which involved Dia and his Four-Year Plan of socialization and modernization in a conflict with the traditional and conservative elements in Senegal, was resolved in favor of Senghor. Always willing to compromise, Senghor was much more sensitive than Dia to the real sources of power in the country. A further point in Senghor's favor was the support of the army whose obedience to Senghor rather than Dia proved decisive in the immediate resolution of the crisis; under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Alfred Diallo, who stepped in during the height of the crisis, the army has continued to be loyal. Senghor's party, the Senegalese Progressive Union (UPS), is essentially an alliance of regional clan and religious groupings whose representatives in the National Assembly resisted Dia and would again resist modernization if their interests were challenged. Although Senghor favors modernization--framed in terms of building African socialism--he finds that his control of the political situation is dependent upon conservative leaders who have the power to frustrate Senghor's reform measures. Personally a methodical, self-disciplined, scrupulously honest man, Senghor has expressed deep disappointment with the inefficiency and dishonesty of his officials and periodically he considers major revisions of his Cabinet.

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Leopold Sedar SENGHOR (cont.)

His chagrin together with the gloomy economic future may be behind the decision expressed to a newspaperman in April 1966 that he may not seek re-election as President when his current term of office expires in 1967.

Senghor was born on 9 October 1906 in the coastal town of Joal, near Dakar, one of 20 children of a rich planter. He is a Mandinka (of Senegal's third largest ethnic group, the Serer). Educated by the White Fathers in Joal and at the Seminaire Libermann in Dakar, he won a scholarship to the Lycee Louis le Grand in Paris, and later attended the Ecole Normale Supérieure of the University of Paris, where he majored in literature and languages and received the degree of agregé de grammaire in 1935. Until 1940, he devoted himself to teaching literature, first at the Lycee in Tours, then at the Lycee Marcellin-Berthelot at Paris. He served in the French Army in World War II, was captured when France surrendered and was confined in a series of prison camps. In 1943 he was freed and resumed teaching. He joined the faculty of the Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer in 1948.

While pursuing a brilliant career in education, Senghor became acquainted with a Senegalese representative in the French National Assembly, Amadou Lamine Gueye. As his protegee, Senghor became a member of the French Socialist Party (SFIO), campaigned in Senegal as "the deputy from the bush," and was elected to the 1945 and 1946 Constituent Assemblies with Lamine Gueye. With the gradual enfranchisement of the rural electorate in Senegal, Senghor came to command enough political support to challenge Lamine Gueye. Senghor resigned from the SFIO in September 1948 to form the Bloc Democratique Senegalais (BDS), with a school teacher named Mamadou Dia as secretary general. In addition to his refusal to align himself with Lamine Gueye's Socialists, Senghor also shunned the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), an interterritorial grouping of West African deputies in the French National Assembly led by Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast. He preferred to associate with the Independants d'Outre-Mer (IOM), a group of overseas deputies who refused the SFIO label and could not accept the RDA's alliance with the French Communist Party.

In the 1951 elections for the French National Assembly, Senghor and the BDS made a strong appeal to the Muslim religious leaders. By gaining their support, Senghor captured a base of power which he has never lost. He served in the National Assembly until 1959, serving as secretary of state for scientific research from 1955 to 1956 in the Edgar Faure government. In 1956 the BDS formed a coalition with a number of smaller parties and became known as the Bloc Progressiste Senegalais. In reaction to the reforms of the loi-cadre, which Senghor thought did not go far enough in granting internal autonomy and which he felt threatened the cohesion of French West Africa, Senghor called a conference which resulted in the formation of an interterritorial party, the Convention Africaine, which hoped to prevent Balkanization. Although Senghor's party won handily in Senegal in the March 1957 elections for the Territorial Assembly, the Convention Africaine's other

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Leopold Sedar SENGHOR (cont.)

sections were overshadowed by the RDA. Rather than abandon the Grand Council of French West Africa to the RDA, the Convention Africaine allied itself with the Socialist parties to form the Parti du Regroupement Africain (PRA) which included virtually all non-RDA parties in West Africa. In the celebrated referendum of September 1958, the UPS campaigned successfully for a oui vote and Senegal became a republic within the French Community. The PRA then drew up preliminary arrangements for an independent West African federation to be closely associated with France, i. e., "a Commonwealth a la Francaise." Senghor and other pro-federation leaders met in Bamako in December 1958 and drew up a constitution for the Mali Federation which would be independent in association with France. Senegal was granted autonomy in November 1958 and joined with the former French Soudan to become the Mali Federation in January 1959--the only two states to federate as a result of the Bamako meeting. Senghor became a member of the Mali Federal Assembly in April 1959 and, soon afterward, its President. Complete independence was granted in June 1960 but the Mali Federation broke up when Senegal left the federation in August 1960. Senghor became President of Senegal a month later.

A courageous and resourceful man, Senghor combines many qualities: the popular appeal of a bush politician, the administrative zeal of a dedicated executive and the intellect of an inspired humanist philosopher. His speeches reflect his intellectual French Marxist and liberal Roman Catholic background which combine in a pragmatic--although not always completely realistic--approach to problems. Senghor is an accomplished extemporaneous orator whose command of French is excellent. During a visit to Nigeria in 1965, he made an address in English and he also impressed those he met socially with his facility with the language. Senghor began publishing in 1945 when his first collection of poems, *Chants d'Ombre*, appeared. This book reflected his now-famous concept of *negritude*--an awareness of Black African values and tradition--which was intended to restore the word Negro to its original dignity by making black men conscious of the values of their civilization. He has also written on African socialism, translated many literary works into French and has written essays and political tracts.

A thin, bespectacled man of medium height, Senghor divorced his first wife who was the daughter of Felix Eboue, former governor of French Equatorial Africa. His second wife, the former Colette Hubert, [redacted] is a Frenchwoman. [redacted]. The Senghors have three sons: Francis, Guy and Philippe.

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18 May 1966

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